

Shawnee Methodist Mission,
East Building,
Kansas City, Kansas.

HABS No. KANS-3

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Kansas

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CENTRAL UNIT--ST. LOUIS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Ralph E. Scamell, District Officer
711 National Reserve Building, Topeka, Kansas.

EAST BUILDING
Shawnee Methodist Mission (Old Shawnee Mission),
Johnson County, vicinity Kansas City, Kansas.

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Historical Data

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Date of erection: 1841.

Present owner: State of Kansas.

Notable events and occupants:

A Methodist Mission was established in 1830 by the Rev. Thomas Johnson near Chouteau's trading post, not far from the present town of Turner in Wyandotte County. It became outstanding because of the Shawnee manual labor school organized with money received from the church and from the Federal government.

In 1839 Rev. Johnson began building on the present site in Johnson County and the school became an establishment of 2000 acres, containing 3 large brick buildings with an enrollment of nearly 200 Indian boys and girls. For years it was an outpost of civilization on the Western frontier. The Santa Fe and Oregon trails passed near its doors. Many of the great figures of the old west were entertained here. In 1854 it became the executive offices of the first governor of the territory of Kansas. The legislators convened here to pass the first territorial laws. It was the scene of many conflicts between Antislavery and Proslavery parties. During the Civil War the buildings were barracks for Union troops and in 1864 a battle was fought across the Mission fields.

In 1862 the school was discontinued and the property fell into private hands. It was not until 1927 that the present site of 12 acres, including the 3 old brick buildings, was acquired by the state. It is now managed by the Kansas State Historical Society, with the Colonial Dames, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of 1812, the Daughters of the American Colonists, and the Shawnee Mission Indian Historical Society, in active cooperation.

The East building provided a chapel, classrooms, and sleeping quarters for Indian boys and girls. Classes of Western academy - the classical department - were held here from 1848 to 1851. The first territorial legislature met in this building, and passed the so-called bogus laws. It is now the museum.

Reference: "Annals of Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School," compiled by Martha B. Caldwell. Published by The Kansas State Historical Society, (Topeka, Kansas, 1939). 119 pp. illus.

Prepared by Ida B. Guild July 10, 1940.

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